GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
TOURISM
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1336
ANSWERED ON:02.05.2016
Support for Pilgrim Tourism
Chowdhary Shri Pankaj;Lokhande Shri Sadashiv Kisan;Nishad Shri Ajay;Rathwa Shri Ramsinh Patalyabhai;Saraswati Shri Sumedhanand

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has any proposal to develop and promote "Pilgrim Tourism" at holy places in the country and has formulated any scheme for the development of the places of religious and historical importance;
(b) if so, the locations identified for religious tourism and the number of worship sites developed as tourist places during the last three years along with the number of domestic and foreign tourists who visited such places during the last three years, State-wise;
(c) the details of the funds allocated and expenditure incurred thereon, State-wise;
(d) whether the Government has taken any initiatives to make religious sites more accessible and safe to tourists after some incidents of stampede and mishaps;
(e) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to ensure safe journey to tourists visiting these places; and
(f) whether the Government has provided financial assistance to any foreign country for pilgrim tourism and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TOURISM (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)
(DR. MAHESH SHARMA)

(a) to (c): Ministry of Tourism launched a Plan Scheme "National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive" (PRASAD) in 2014-15 with an objective of beautifying, developing and improving amenities of important pilgrimage destinations of the country. Under the PRASAD scheme 13 sites in the country have been identified for promoting and developing places of religious and historical importance.

The sites identified under the scheme are, Amritsar, Ajmer, Kedarnath, Dwarka, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Kamakhya, Puri, Amravati, Kanchipuram , Velankanni and Patna.

Ministry of Tourism has launched another Plan Scheme "Swadesh Darshan" in 2014-15 for integrated development of theme based circuits. Under Swadesh Darshan thirteen thematic circuits have been identified, including four religious/spiritual thematic circuits i.e. Buddhist Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Spiritual Circuit and Ramayana Circuit.

Details of funds sanctioned for "PRASAD" and "Swadesh Darshan" scheme and tourist visit in the country is at Annexure I, II & III.

(d) & (e): The guidelines of PRASAD provide for informatory/directional signage, first aid centres, Wi-Fi etc. Components such as queue shelter/complex, CCTV, etc. are also admissible under the scheme.

The Ministry has launched the 24x7 Toll Free Multi-Lingual Tourist Helpline in 12 International languages including Hindi & English on 08.02.2016. This service is available on the toll free number 1800111363 or on a short code 1363. The Help Line provides support service in terms of providing information relating to Travel & Tourism in the country and assist the callers with advice on action to be taken during times of distress while travelling in India and if need be, alert the concerned authorities.

As advised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have deployed Tourist Police, in one form or the other.

In addition, the Union Ministry of Tourism along with stakeholders has adopted the 'Code of conduct for Safe and Honourable Tourism' which is a set of guidelines to encourage tourism activities to be undertaken with respect for basic rights like dignity, safety and freedom from exploitation of both tourist and local residence, in particular, women and children. These guidelines are voluntarily accepted and implemented by hotelier, tour operators, travel agents and other service providers. The State Government/Union Territory Administrations can widely promote this Code of Conduct and also ensure its implementation.

(f): No, Madam. However, since 1996 certain numbers of gratis Visas have been issued to Myanmar pilgrims annually for visit to sacred Buddhist places.

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